

The Hebrew Corner

Often in the Tanach we see that a father will give a blessing to his children, frequently at a time when the father is nearing death. King David gave a blessing such as this to his son Solomon (1 Chronicles 22:8-12):

“But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever. Now, my son, the LORD be with thee; and prosper thou, and build the house of the LORD thy God, as he hath said of thee. Only the LORD give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the LORD thy God.”

The word rest that is seen in the passage is a translation of the Hebrew word manuach (מנוח, mah-NOO-ahch), meaning condition of rest, or state of rest, from the Hebrew root nuach (נוח, NOO-ahch), which is also the root of the biblical name Noah.

In this study, we will focus on two blessings given to the tribes of Israel, first by Jacob in Genesis 49:1-27, then by Moses in Deuteronomy 33:1-29. The blessings of Jacob were upon his children, who would later become the tribes of Israel, while the

blessings of Moses were upon the tribes of Israel, who would soon after become the nation of Israel.

A reading of this pair of blessings reveal more differences than similarities. There are some clues as to the differences of the blessings of Levi and Simeon, and we will consider these. After this, some questions are posed to the reader concerning the blessings of the other tribes.

Jacob's blessing upon the tribes of Levi and Simeon was more of a curse, as shown in the following passage (Genesis 49:5-7):

“Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.”

It is made clear that both tribes are to be scattered in Israel. The word scatter is translated from the Hebrew verb poots (פּוּץ, POOTZ), which means to be dispersed or scattered. However, the differences between this scattering becomes apparent as we read more in the Torah about the destiny of these two tribes. Moses' blessings concerning these two tribes are vastly different, as observed in the following passage (Deuteronomy 33:8-11):

“And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his

brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word and kept thy covenant. They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar. Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.”

Having given an abundant blessing to the tribe of Levi, what kind of blessing did Moses give to the tribe of Simeon? He gave no blessing to this tribe, nor any mention. In fact the inheritance given to the tribe of Simeon was within the territory given to Judah, as this territory was large, and more than Judah could manage (see Joshua 19:9). The fate of these two tribes is in stark contrast: Levites became the tribe of priests, and although they were in fact scattered throughout Israel, in various cities set aside for them, they were set apart as holy to the Lord, and were ministers to him. Descendants of the tribe of Levi can be found to this very day. In fact, Jewish people with the family name Cohen are of this tribe, cohen (כהן, coh-HAYN) being the Hebrew word for priest. However, Simeon was one of the ten tribes that sided with the northern kingdom during the split of Israel into two kingdoms during the reign of Rehoboam, who succeeded Solomon as king. Later, with the Assyrian invasion and dispersion of the people of the northern kingdom, they were scattered among the nations, and essentially became a lost tribe.

Why the difference in the fate of these two tribes? There is a principle in the Bible that is known as a generational curse. When the head of a family comes under the condemnation of God, the curse may extend not just to the immediate family, but to

succeeding generations as well (see Deuteronomy 5:9). So how did the tribe of Levi escape the curse?

It is apparent that Levi was brought out of this curse through a member of the tribe of Levi turning to God for deliverance. We know that Moses, his brother Aaron, and his sister Miriam, were all of the tribe of Levi. Moses' faith and obedience to God were exhibited after his encounter with God at the burning bush. He became a friend of God, and talked regularly with God. At times he intervened with God for the Israelites, to turn away God's wrath. Thus Moses was able to affect the destiny of not only his own tribe, but also the nation of Israel.

This is a lesson for us. We may also have experienced generational curses in our own family. From the example of Moses, we can infer that the action of one family turning to God, through receiving the gift of his son Yeshua, can apparently affect generations within a family, breaking long-standing generational curses. If such a curse exists in your family, you may be the one that God has appointed to break the curse!

Concerning the contrasting blessings of Jacob and Moses upon the other tribes, the following questions are left for the reader to consider:

Why did Jacob curse Reuben, but Moses give a blessing to the tribe of Reuben?

Why did Judah get an extended, prophetic blessing from Jacob, but a only a short blessing by Moses, less than that given to the tribe of

Gad?

In the blessing of the tribe of Asher by Moses, what is meant by “... and let him dip his foot in oil ...”? Note: here the Hebrew root used is shemen (שֶׁמֶן, SHEH- mehn), here translated as oil, but the same root appears in Jacob's blessing (Genesis 49:20), but in this case translated as fat.

Why in Genesis 49:18, between Jacob's blessings of Dan and Gad, is this phrase inserted, “I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD.”?

You are encouraged to search scripture for insight into these questions, and to invite the Holy Spirit to give you guidance. Blessings to you and your family, and may you have a peaceful month.